

ANANDA ICONS: GALLANT IN WAR & BENEVOLENT IN PEACE

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Ananda and the Armed Services

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It is an interesting fact that until Independence, Anandians were carefully and systematically excluded from positions of responsibility in the Police and the Armed Forces. This was despite the fact that Ananda's achievements in Cadetting has been for a number of years the most outstanding among the school in this country.

Though this was a situation that was highly anomalous, not to say unjust, our Colonial rulers did nothing to change their policy. Their attitude was understandable. As the stronghold of Buddhism and national sentiment, Ananda had necessarily to be viewed with suspicion.

In the years immediately after Independence, the Cadets of Ananda College, led by Lieut. G. W. Rajapakse, attained new heights of excellence. Between 1948 and 1951, they repeatedly annexed every possible Cadetting trophy, while they also beat the Armed Forces at open competitions. During this period Ananda's Cadetting achievements became a household word in the country.

It was at this juncture that Principal Mettananda took up with the Prime Minister, D. S. Senanayake, the question of Ananda's position in relation to the Armed Services. He pointed out that if its students had been handpicked to be kept out of the Armed Forces under Foreign rule, there was no ground whatsoever for such exclusion in an Independent country.

He wanted Anandians, as true products of our land, to be considered on their merits for such appointments and to be given the same chance as candidates from any other school. Mr. Mettananda's case was irresistible, and the Prime Minister conceded his point.

Once the preferential treatment given to a few favoured schools had been replaced by the principle of selection on merit and merit alone, there followed a remarkable intake of Anandians into the Police and the Armed Forces. This process has gone on steadily since then, until today we are in the happy position of being able to say that Ananda has the highest number of officers from a single school in the Police and the Armed Services.

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